UMBRA PROJECT // INTERNAL FILE

DOCUMENT DESIGNATION: SIGMA–RIFT–RPT–HOLLOWWAR–042

ARCHIVAL NODE: ECHOARCHIVE6

CLEARANCE TIER: SIGMA-9 // EYES ONLY

// FIELD TRANSMISSION //

Undisclosed FOB, Syrian Border, 0100 Hours, Local time

The air in the forward operating base was thick with heat and the stale burn of cheap cigarettes. The hum of UAVs droned in the background, their watchful eyes cutting through the endless desert. A battered projector flickered against a sand-colored tarp, displaying grainy satellite images—an ancient ruin nestled deep in enemy territory. Twelve men sat in the makeshift briefing room, their faces lit by the dim glow of the screen. These weren't just any soldiers. They were Tier-1, the kind of operators whose names never made it into reports, whose missions never officially existed. Delta. DEVGRU. A few select others pulled in for this specific op. Men who had spent their entire lives staring death in the face and making it blink first. Tonight, they weren't hunting high-value targets or dismantling insurgent networks.

Tonight, it was personal.

"Three days ago, our guy, Sergeant First Class Matthew Cole, was taken alive during a failed HVT raid," the intel officer began, his voice clipped, all business. "We picked up a distress beacon twelve hours ago from this site. Satellite confirms movement. That means he's still breathing."A low murmur ran through the group. They had all served with Cole at some point. He wasn't just another name on a manifest. He was one of theirs. And nobody left their own behind. The commander, Lieutenant Colonel

James Havner, stood, his presence commanding immediate silence. "You all know the deal. We hit this place hard and fast. Priority is Cole—extract and exfil. We clear anything in our way. If it moves and it's not one of us, it dies. No mistakes. No delays."

Someone in the back, maybe Ramirez, muttered under his breath, "What the fuck happened to Havoc-6?"

A sharp glance from Havner shut him up immediately. But that single whisper hung in the air like a bad omen. The last team sent into this area had vanished. No bodies. No radio chatter. Just gone. And yet here they were, going in anyway.

Havner took a slow drag from his cigarette, then exhaled through his nose. "We bring our own home," he said finally, voice like iron. "Gear up."

The room emptied in practiced silence, men sliding magazines into place, checking optics, strapping down gear. In another life, they might’ve been just men. Fathers. Husbands. Sons. But tonight, they were only hunters. And they were going to bring their brother home.No matter what.

——————————— // AUDIO INTERFERENCE DETECTED // ———————————

The Blackhawks skimmed low over the dunes, their rotors slicing the air like whispered threats. The desert stretched out endlessly below, a vast, lifeless expanse bathed in the pale glow of moonlight. Wind howled across the sand, carrying a ghostly wail that slithered through the cracks of the aircraft’s fuselage.

Inside, the squad sat in practiced silence, their faces concealed behind NVGs, weapons locked and loaded. The mission was simple on paper—drop in, breach the ruins, extract Cole, and exfil. Just

another night in a warzone. But something gnawed at the edges of their instincts, an unease that had nothing to do with the standard risks of a black op.

"Two minutes to drop," the pilot crackled over comms.

Havner nodded once, gripping the overhead handle as he surveyed his men. No one spoke. They had all been on too many missions to waste words now.

Then Ramirez broke the silence. "You feel that?"

McCallister shot him a glance. "Feel what?"

Ramirez shifted uncomfortably in his seat, rolling his shoulders. "Like... pressure. In the air. Like we're flying into a storm, but there's no wind."No one responded. A few heads tilted slightly, as if trying to pinpoint what he meant.

The desert was dry, the air thin and crisp, but now it felt thick—suffocating, as if something unseen was pushing down on them. The Black Hawks banked hard to the right, the ancient ruins appearing below—massive, jagged remnants of something far older than any recorded civilization. The structure jutted out from the desert floor like broken teeth, its dark corridors swallowing the moonlight whole.

"Something's not right," muttered Moore, adjusting his NVGs. The faintest flicker of static ran across his vision—a glitch, just for a second.

"I saw that too," muttered another operator. "Goggles must be acting up."

Havner exhaled sharply. "Doesn't change the mission. Stay focused."

A sharp tone came through their headsets—the pilot again. "One minute. LZ is hot. No movement, but something's scrambling our sensors."

Havner's jaw clenched. "Copy. Stick to protocol. We go in fast, secure Cole, and get the

hell out."

Then, through the static and garbled transmission, they heard it.

A scream.

It came through their radios, distorted and distant, but unmistakably human."Please—"

Then nothing.

The entire squad went rigid, fingers tightening over triggers, pulses quickening.

"That was Cole." McCallister's voice was grave, as if he didn't want to believe what he had just heard.

Ramirez looked at Havner. "Sir, we need to move. Now."

The pilot's voice cut back in. "Thirty seconds. Dropping fast. Get ready."

Havner gave a single nod. "No mistakes. We go in hard."

The wheels hit the ground. The Black Hawks didn't linger. The squad poured out onto the sand, weapons raised, eyes scanning every shadow.

Then, somewhere beyond the ruins, something moved.

Something... wrong.

#

Cole's scream tore through their headsets, raw, broken—dying.

Havner didn't need to give the order. The squad was already moving. McCallister slammed the first charge against the stone archway, barely waiting for the detonation before they pushed through the breach. A shockwave of dust and debrisflooded the corridor, night vision washing out momentarily in the chaos. Then they were inside, rifles raised, eyes scanning. They had barely cleared the first room

when the gunfire started. Rounds ricocheted off ancient stone, kicking up sparks, filling the air with choking dust. The squad dropped low, returned fire, pushing forward inch by inch. The insurgents were dug in, disciplined, their gunfire methodical. But something about their movements was off. They weren't maneuvering. They weren't pressing their advantage. They were holding. Buying time.

"They're stalling us!" Ramirez yelled, shoving another mag into his rifle as rounds snapped past his helmet. Havner saw it now—the way the insurgents weren't retreating, just sacrificing themselves to keep them pinned down. And then, over the firefight, they heard it.

A low, rhythmic chant.

Havner's eyes snapped to the far side of the ruined arena, past the muzzle flashes, past the bodies dropping in pools of blood. There, in the open-air pit below, Cole was bound to a stone altar, naked, battered, barely conscious.Surrounding him, robed figures swayed, their voices rising, hands moving in eerie unison. They didn't even look up as bullets cracked past them.

"Fuck! MOVE!" Havner roared.

The team surged forward, ducking and weaving through suppressive fire. They were so close. Just a few more seconds— Then one of the lead cultists stepped forward. A curved dagger in his hands.

A heartbeat.

Another.

Havner felt time slow as the blade arced downward—

Cole's throat opened in a single, brutal motion.

Cole’s blood came in thick, arterial waves, soaking into the altar’s ancient carvings. The cultists’ chanting reached a fever pitch, voices crashing together in a cacophony that reverberated through the ruins like a living thing.

Then the ground trembled.

It was subtle at first, a deep bass hum beneath their boots, like a subsonic roar building from within the earth itself. Sand cascaded from the ruins in thin streams, ancient stonegroaning under invisible strain.

The temperature plummeted, desert heat collapsing into something frigid, unnatural.

McCallister gasped, breath pluming in the sudden cold. "What the fuck—?"

Then the sky blackened. Not just cloud cover. Not a storm. Something else. A vast, swirling darkness poured in like ink, blotting out the stars, devouring the moonlight.

“Ramirez, what’s happening?” Havner barked, voice tight, adrenaline surging.

Ramirez didn’t answer. His fingers twitched over his scope, his breathing shallow. The stars were gone.

Every single one. Like they had never existed. A crack splintered the air. Not a sound—an event. Like reality itself had split. Something had broken. The ruins buckled inward as if gravity had momentarily shifted. The cultists didn’t flinch, didn’t stop their chant—they only lifted their arms higher, triumphant, welcoming.

Then the shockwave hit.

A concussive blast erupted from the altar, disintegrating the nearest cultists where they stood. Their robes vanished in an instant, their bodies unmade, flesh and bone scattered into the wind like

dust.Operators were flung backward like ragdolls. Ramirez hit a stone pillar with bone-snapping force. Moore tumbled into the dirt, rifle skittering from his grasp.

Havner's vision whited out, the force of the blast screaming through his skull.

And then—

Silence.

Complete and total. A void where sound should have been.

The air shimmered, rippled, like the heat distortion above asphalt. Except this was cold, wrong.

And then the wailing began.

Not human. Not from any living thing that had ever walked the earth. A low, undulating keen, stretching impossibly long, echoing from nowhere and everywhere at once. McCallister clawed at his helmet, gasping, his mouth opening in a scream that produced no sound. His NVGs flickered, static bleeding into his vision. The world around them warped, bent—stone twisting, shadows stretching toward them like hungry fingers.

A presence loomed just beyond the veil.

Something was coming through.

#

The wailing crescendoed into a shriek that should not exist.

The air itself fractured.

A rift tore open in the space above the altar—not light, not darkness, but absence. An intrusion into the world, a jagged wound in reality bleeding something through. It convulsed, pulsed, as though something on the other side was pushing through layers of existence.

And then it came.

A limb, if it could be called that, unfolded against the rules of nature. Segmented, chitinous but sinewy, slick with something that shimmered wrong beneath the ruined moonlight. Then another. Then more, too many, jointed appendages forcing their way through the rip in space, clawing for purchase. The cultists who had survived the shockwave dropped to their knees, arms raised high, eyes rolling white.

They had done it. Their prophecy fulfilled.

They didn't even scream when the first tendril lashed out and wrapped around them.

They simply ceased to exist.

Their bodies didn't break, didn't bleed—they *unmade*, collapsing into spirals of shredded light and void, drawn into the pulsing wound like whispers vanishing into an abyss. Havner's mind screamed at him to move. To fight. To run. But his body was frozen, paralyzed by something beyond instinct. Something old and cold and final.

The thing pulled itself free.

First, a torso, elongated, shifting between impossible textures—part sinew, part stone, part abyssal void. Then a head, a suggestion of a face that did not belong in this reality, features shifting, twisting, disappearing altogether before returning as something worse.

Its presence burned into their eyes, a shape not meant to be perceived.

And then it stood.

It was impossibly tall, towering over the altar, its form never staying still, its mass shifting like a mirage but solid as stone. The sand around it blackened, calcified, cracking like burnt bone.

Then it moved.

The first soldier to react was Moore. He fired. A three-round burst directly into the thing's center mass. The rounds vanished before impact.

It turned to him. Not fast. Not slow. Just inevitability.

One limb shot forward, piercing Moore's chest, lifting him with no effort. Moore choked, his body contorting in ways the human frame was never meant to. His arms stretched, snapped, inverted. His scream died in his throat as his face pulled inward, collapsing, erasing. By the time the thing released him, he was no longer a man. Just a husk, his form folded into something lesser, something ruined.

Panic broke.

"FUCKING RUN!"

The squad scattered.

But the thing had already chosen.

The hunt had begun.

——————————— // MISSION DEVIATION – CLASSIFIED // ———————————

The cultists were the first to die en masse. The entity did not discriminate. It did not choose. It simply moved. One turned to run, dropping his rifle in blind terror. He made it two steps before a shadow fell over him. A limb lashed forward—jagged, too many joints, too many angles. It hooked under his ribcage and pulled.He came apart like wet silk. Bones liquified, flesh stretched, his scream cut short as his body folded inward and collapsed into nothing. Another cultist, trembling as he raised his rifle, blinked out of existence before he could even pull the trigger.

Gunfire erupted, but it was meaningless.

The soldiers didn't hesitate. They had seen death before. They had fought wars in the shadows, killed men at point-blank range. Their response was automatic—trained muscle memory honed over years of brutal experience.

Ramirez was first, his M4 cracking in rapid succession, rounds center-mass. The bullets never hit. They simply ceased to exist before impact, swallowed by the thing's shifting, impossible form. McCallister emptied a grenade launcher, the explosions blooming against the night like a miniature sun. The entity walked through the fire.

"Fucking hell!" Johnson bellowed, slamming a fresh mag home. "KEEP FIRING!"

Havner took control, barking orders through the chaos.

"CONCENTRATE FIRE! MOVE TO COVER!"

The squad fell into formation, their movements sharp and precise. No panic. No hesitation. Just raw, practiced violence.

They unloaded everything they had. A storm of lead, shrapnel, and fire tore through the night. Tracer rounds stitched across the thing's shifting body, disappearing like sparks into the void.

It did not slow. It did not flinch. It moved.

And then it was in the middle of them.

Ramirez screamed as the thing's limb lashed out, hooking under his arm, yanking him skyward. "NO—!"

His body folded backward, spine snapping audibly as his ribcage caved inward. He was gone before he hit the ground.

The squad began to break.

"FALL BACK!" Havner roared, rallying them. He had been in firestorms before. He had pulled men out of the jaws of death. He knew how to control chaos.

This was not chaos. This was annihilation.

He had one chance—pull the squad together, retreat in formation, get the fuck out—

And then he was gone.

It happened in a blink.

One moment, Havner was shouting, leading, keeping them alive. The next, a limb lanced through his chest. For a second, he was still standing. His eyes wide, his mouth opening—but no sound came out.

Then, with effortless precision, the entity pulled him apart.

Not a slow tear. Not a struggle. Just sheer, impossible force.

His body ripped in half, his blood steaming against the cold air as his insides splattered across the ruins.

The squad stopped fighting.

For the first time, true, raw panic took hold.

There was no victory. No mission. No command structure.

There was only the running.

#

Training was gone. Discipline was gone.

The squad fractured.

Some fought, still clinging to the last threads of protocol, their weapons barking useless defiance.

Bullets vanished. Grenades detonated without sound, their force swallowed before they could even

reach the thing. Some froze. Not out of choice. Not because they hesitated. Because something unseen had gripped their minds.

Martinez stood in the open, rifle slack in his hands, his head tilting too far, too fast to one side, as if he was listening to something whispered from beyond the veil of reality. His mouth opened, and a low, rattling sound poured from his throat, not human, not his own. Then his chest bulged. Something inside him pushed outward.

He screamed. Not in pain. In understanding.

And then he came apart.

Not violently. Not messily.

He peeled, unfolded into something new. His flesh rearranged, his bones bending like molten wax, his eyes stretching wide, wide, wide before vanishing altogether into the ruin of his skull.

He was not dead.

He was something else.

The others didn't see it. Couldn't. Because the world was breaking. McCallister ran, his breath heaving in ragged gasps, his boots pounding the stone. He could see the exit, could see the sky, but every time he moved forward, the ruins stretched.

The doorway was always ten feet ahead. No matter how fast he ran.

He was not moving.

"WHERE THE FUCK IS OUT?" he screamed, spinning in circles. He had been here before. No, not before. Just now. Just again.

He could hear his own voice echoing ahead of him.

And behind.

And behind.

And behind.

Then the walls bent. Folding in like paper, spiraling toward him.

He screamed.

And he ceased to exist.

Stevens was still fighting. Still trying to reload his rifle with hands that were not his own. His fingers had lengthened, stretching unnaturally, too many joints, his veins black as oil. He didn't notice. Until his hands snapped backward.

Then he noticed.

Then he screamed.

Then he wasn't Stevens anymore.

The few who could still think, who could still move, made the only choice left.

They ran.

Not to fight. Not to win.

Just to leave.

Because the ones who stayed?

They were no longer men.

——————————— // CORRUPTED FRAGMENT – DECAY % 47.1 // ———————————

They ran until their bodies refused to move.

The desert swallowed them whole, an endless stretch of sand and stone, the ruins

nothing but a dark smudge on the horizon behind them. The last remnants of whatever they had unleashed now nothing more than a whisper in the wind.

Or so they thought.

Night stretched too long. The sun, when it rose, did not rise right. It hung at the edge of the horizon, never fully climbing into the sky, casting long, stretched shadows that neverseemed to shorten. Some of them swore the sun never moved at all. Others weren't sure it had risen at all.

The survivors—if they could still be called that—kept moving, but time no longer made sense.

How many days had passed?

McCallister's watch had stopped. So had everyone else's.

Longman, or whatever was left of him, kept muttering under his breath, voice hoarse and broken. "It's not over. It's not over. We didn't leave. We think we did, but we didn't."

Nobody had the strength to argue.

Water was running low. Food was gone. Nobody spoke of trying to turn back.

And then came the whispers.

It started on the comms. Static. Then voices.

Not theirs.

McCallister yanked off his headset, throwing it to the ground like it was burning him.

"That's not fucking possible."

The others heard it too.

Havner's voice. "Where are you going?"

They froze.

Havner was dead. Ripped in half.

But the voice on the comm was calm. Collected. Just like before.

“Why are you running?”

McCallister swallowed, his throat dry as sand. “Do you hear that?”

Smith let out a slow, ragged breath. “Yeah. Yeah, I fucking hear it.”

They ran again.

Faster. Harder. Until their lungs burned and their legs screamed for relief.

But no matter how far they ran, no matter how long they pushed forward, the whispers never left.

And then one of them—they weren’t even sure who anymore—looked up and said, voice hollow, shaking, distant:

“The stars are wrong.”

And for the first time, they looked up.

And saw that he was right.

#

They stumbled into civilization days later, or maybe weeks. Time still felt wrong, like it was running parallel to something unseen, something they had brushed against but never fully escaped. The village was small, tucked near the border. People stared. They must have looked feral—gaunt, sunburned, eyes hollow from something far worse than exhaustion. They tried to radio command.

Nothing.

The village elder let them use a satellite phone. The call went through. The military knew they were alive.

They were picked up hours later. No fanfare. No relief. Just silence. The debrief never happened. No questions were asked. No explanations given. A new mission file was created, labeled with a different designation. The old one no longer existed. Their weapons were confiscated. Their gear scrubbed. Every round fired, every magazine spent—erased.

The bodies left behind? They were never there.

“What the fuck is happening?” McCallister whispered, voice cracking. “Why aren’t they asking us what happened?”

Smith didn’t answer. He just stared at the stars, waiting for them to move. They never did.

Days passed. They were separated, sent back to their units or assigned to new postings.

They weren’t discharged. They weren’t detained. They were just... moved.

Like pieces on a board being reset.

But the truth was out there.

A story like this never truly dies.

It spread in whispers, low voices in hookah lounges, in the dark corners of forward outposts, passed between operators who had seen too much to dismiss it outright.

They called it “The Hollow War.” The one mission that went wrong. The one they buried.

But it was too late.

Word was already spreading. And something was still listening.

// DOCUMENT CLOSURE – UMBRA FILE SIG–HW–042 //

ARCHIVAL TAG: ECHOARCHIVE6–SIGMA–RIFT–TRANSMAT–BETA

HANDLER: ██–██–"BISHOP"

ACCESS LEVEL: TANGO–3 – COGNITIVE LOCK REQUIRED

SUMMARY:

Subject narrative exhibits full symptom cluster associated with RIFT EXPOSURE – STAGE 3:

• Temporal bleed

• Echolalia contamination

• Identity fragmentation

• Nonlinear perceptual collapse

Possible convergence with CASEFILES:

– RASHID–01

– HELLFIRE–PROTO–042

– OPERATION GLASSHOUSE (debrief pending)

ANALYST NOTE:

Internal timestamps do not match exterior timeline. Cross-reference with POLARIS-ECHO vector maps suggested.

STATUS:

FLAGGED FOR ECHOHAZARD CONTAINMENT // DO NOT REPLICATE

>> **FINAL ENTRY:**

THE WAR NEVER ENDED. IT JUST FORGOT WHO IT WAS FIGHTING.

// END OF DOCUMENT //